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ABSTRACT

An argument for teaching vision development and clarification in educational administration programs through the use of multiple conceptual frameworks is presented in this paper. A review of two conceptual frameworks--reflective practice and leadership forces--concludes that vision, a key ingredient of effective leadership, must be more thoroughly incorporated into educational administrative preparation programs. The recommendation is made for the use of multiple frameworks to integrate coursework and experience combined with written exercises that force meaning clarification. Two figures and one table are included. (18 references) (LMI)

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Utilizing Multiple Frameworks to Integrate Knowledge and Experience in Educational Administration Preparation Programs

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Introduction

The recent literature on school and organizational effectiveness cites, perhaps more universally than any other characteristic, the necessity of vision for leaders of organizations (e.g. Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Dwyer, Barnett & Lee, 1987; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Shelve & Schoenhelt, 1987). Yet, Tyack and Hansot (1982) have observed an alarming lack of vision in today's public school leaders. They note that 19th-century educational leaders "shared a common religious and political conception of the role of public education" (p.5). In contrast, today's public school leader "resembles an heir receiving a handsome legacy from a distant relative whose purposes now seem unclear or even quaint" (p.4). Surprisingly, educational administration programs do little to proactively stimulate the development and refinement of vision in their students. Even more surprisingly, discussion of how schools of education might incorporate this concept into their leadership preparation programs is noticeably absent from recent reports dealing with the preparation of school leaders.

The lack of vision exhibited by public school leaders may be partially due the inadequate way in which

vision is addressed and integrated in preparation programs for educational leaders.

1. Most educational administration preparation programs address vision on a surface level only. Classes may include an explanation of vision and its importance as an ingredient of effective leadership. Less likely to be included are activities or coursework that help students a.) develop personal visions, b.) develop skills to facilitate shared vision development with their school staffs, c.) translate cognitively-held visions into administrative practice, and d.) address the thorny questions of vision. What process does an educational leader utilize to develop a vision? How does s/he promote and implement the vision? Is the traditional way of organizing and administering schools consistent with the vision? (For example, is an organizational pattern where children progress in groups from grade to grade every nine months consistent with a vision of meeting the individual needs of every child?). Without attention to these aspects of vision, it remains an abstract and impractical concept.

2. Current preparation programs in educational administration are largely characterized by disjointed courses and disjointed topics within courses (Achilles,

1988). While administrative candidates may exit preparation programs with much information, they are less likely to emerge with an integrated perspective of the knowledge base, a unifying conceptual framework to guide their work and sensemaking. Zais (1976) notes that, "Although reality is in fact an indivisible mass, man has found that by cutting it into hypothetical segments and looking at it theoretically, piece by piece, he can extract meaning from it. (He also extracts meaning by putting pieces back together again, i.e. relating the pieces to one another.)" (p.75). Modern cognitive theory argues that learning is not just receiving bits of information but rather involves building knowledge structures. It is "thinking- and meaning-centered, yet insists on a central place for knowledge and instruction" (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989, p.3). Educational administration programs have done well in cutting the reality of administrative work into segments. They have done less well helping students put the pieces together again, creating knowledge structures that facilitate sensemaking.

The purpose of this paper is to argue that student vision development and clarification can be facilitated through the use of multiple frameworks. Vision is

defined as "a mental image of a desirable future state" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p.89). A framework is defined as a device or structure that can be utilized as a lens to order, classify and integrate.

Integrating Frameworks

Conceptual frameworks are widely utilized for integration and meaning generation, but are noticeably lacking from educational administration programs. Researchers utilize frameworks such as logical structures (Clark, 1985) and theoretical perspectives as devices to organize data collection and analysis. Curriculum developers use scope and sequence charts and other means of integrating knowledge in a particular subject (unfortunately, this same integration frequently does not take place between subjects). Yet in the development of educational administration preparation programs frameworks are overlooked as an organizing and sensemaking device.

Reflective Practice

Schon's (1989) model of reflective practice serves as an overarching framework through which to view

coursework experiences. Schon observes that professional practice has several characteristics.

1. It is characterized by increasing complexity and uncertainty that is ill-suited to traditional cause-effect type solutions.

2. Professions such as education lack the fixed ends and unambiguous knowledge found in the major professions (see also Clark & Astuto, 1988). Theories and models are based on unique situations that have been sterilized of their complexity in the process of theory-building and model-development. Additionally, they have been developed by researchers who are boundedly rational in their capability for cognition and thus unable to fully comprehend the complexity of the problems they are studying (March & Simon, 1958).

3. Problems that lend themselves to technical, research-based solutions are characteristically insignificant. Problems that are critically important are characteristically messy, complex and uncertain and do not lend themselves to technical or research-based solutions.

Thus, educational administration programs are poorly served by emphasizing the knowledge base without considering the nature of practice. They do their

students a disservice if they pass off theories and models as recipes for practice.

Schon proposes a reflective approach to professional practice based on several arguments.

1. Professionals describe their experiences in solving problems as intuition, trial and error, muddling through. In actuality, they may be utilizing a reflective model of practice.

2. Professionals encounter certain types or elements of situations on a recurring basis, building a repertoire of effective response techniques and of resulting expected outcomes.

3. Unexpected results to recurring situations provide opportunities for refinement of practice. Through reflection on past compared with present experience, descriptions of problems are refined or redefined. New problem statements result in new solutions which are subsequently tested. Plausible explanations for past and present experience are developed and help guide future actions by broadening and enriching the perspective used to interpret subsequent practice.

The reflective <u>practitioner</u> uses reflection to surface and criticize understandings that s/he has

constructed around repetitive experiences. The reflective student uses reflection as a lens through which to view the knowledge base, placing it in the context of past experiences and personal values and beliefs. Simulations, case studies, internships and other means of experiential learning are used to conjoin theoretical knowledge with situations germane to school administration (see Figure 1). Additionally, these activities enhance reflection by adding an action component to what was previously an entirely cognitive experience. Students are forced to reconcile discrepancies between perceived beliefs and actions they have taken. Initially the reflective practitioner might ask questions such as, "How does this theory mesh with my current and past experiences? What does it say to me about how I should practice?" Once the knowledge base has been conjoined with real and simulated experience, questions evolve to, "How does this situation compare with past similar experiences? Which elements were the same? Which elements were different? What may have affected altered outcomes? What was the apparent problem in the previous situations? What was the apparent problem in this situation? What other problems were/are at play? Might the apparent problem in this or the

previous situation be other than the real problem? How does problem definition influence problem-solving? Does the solution depend on the way the problem is defined? How does the problem and its solution indicate that I should alter or refine my understanding of the knowledge base?"

Insert Figure 1 about here

Reflection, thus provides a tool that helps students deal with the ambiguity of knowledge and experience in the context of personal belief systems that are refined and reshaped through considering simulated situations.

Leadership Forces

In conjunction with reflection, a second framework is utilized to more overtly integrate courses and topics. While numerous frameworks could be utilized for this purpose, this paper will focus on the leadership forces hierarchy developed by Sergiovanni (1984). Sergiovanni has argued that leaders have five forces at their disposal--technical, human, educational, symbolic and

cultural forces. He defines a force as the "strength or energy brought to bear on a situation to stop or start motion or change" (p.6).

Technical leadership forces are described as the use of sound management techniques, for example, planning, organizing, coordinating and scheduling. While Sergiovanni includes the use of contingency leadership theory as a technical force, this paper opts for a narrower definition that restricts the technical force to the manipulation of non-human elements (even though manipulation may have a direct or indirect effect on people).

Human leadership forces are derived from social and interpersonal resources and include concepts such as human relations, motivational technologies, morale-building and participatory decision-making. While Sergiovanni includes growth opportunities as a human force, depending on the nature of the growth activity, it may overlap into a third force, the educational force.

The educational force is derived from expert knowledge about teaching, learning, and schooling and includes such skills as diagnosing educational problems, providing for supervision and evaluation, and developing curriculum.

The use of symbolic leadership, the fourth force, involves focusing the attention of others on those things that are important in the school through selective attention or modeling. Touring the school, visiting classrooms downplaying management concerns and emphasizing educational ones, serving as a figurehead to emphasize occasions of importance and communicating vision through words and actions are representative of symbolic leadership. Symbolic leadership calls attention to the technical, human, and educational factors that are important in the school.

Cultural leadership force is "derived from building a unique school culture" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p.6). Cultural leadership involves articulating the values and beliefs that give the school its identity. Sergiovanni lists articulating the school's purpose and mission, socializing new employees to the accepted norms of the school, maintaining and reinforcing appropriate myths, traditions and beliefs as examples of cultural leadership. Upon closer examination it would seem that the means to accomplish some of these tasks is through the application of symbolic leadership forces. Cultural leadership does not become a potent force until the principal has sufficiently focused attention on matters

that are important in the school. It is only when these matters are clearly known and thus, have become part of the school's culture that the culture itself (rather than the principal) exerts a leadership force.

Sergiovanni (1984) argues that the five forces form a hierarchy of ascending importance. The technical force at the bottom of the hierarchy, followed by human and educational forces on the next two levels, must be exerted by the leader for competent schooling to take place. However, in order to achieve excellence, the top two levels of the hierarchy, that is, symbolic and cultural leadership forces must also be present.

The leadership forces hierarchy can be used as an integration tool for educational administration programs in two ways.

1.) It can be utilized as a framework to classify courses in educational administration programs. If Sergiovanni's model for effective leadership is valid, then coursework in educational administration programs should address all five levels. However, an analysis of courses found in traditional educational administration masters degree programs indicates that this is not so (see Table 1). Educational administration preparation programs typically consist of courses such as:

introduction to school administration, evaluation, curriculum, the principalship, school-community relations, supervision, law, finance, personnel, technology, organizational theory/leadership, research and statistics.

Insert Table 1 about here

As may be suspected, the emphasis of these courses is strongly technical with a moderate emphasis on the human dimension. While there is some emphasis on education, it is weak considering the lengthy and lofty rhetoric on the importance of instructional leadership in school administration. It is interesting to note that while instructional leadership has long been viewed as the key element in principal effectiveness, Sergiovanni's (1984) argument suggests that its presence without symbolic and cultural leadership will, at best, result in competence. With the possible exception of some emphasis in an organizational theory/educational leadership type course, the two forces needed for excellence, symbolic and cultural leadership are not evident in traditional

educational administration preparation programs. If Sergiovanni's model is valid, then educational administration programs are dealing with the five leadership forces in order of decreasing importance, spending the most time on the least important force, and the least time on the most important forces. This suggests that educational administration programs are geared toward training aspiring administrators for competence rather than excellence. The public's perception of education supports this. During the last eleven years the percentage of people grading the quality of their local schools as either "B" or a "C" (competent, but not excellent, grades), ranged from 54% to 68%. During the same period those giving their local schools an excellent grade (A) ranged from 6% to 12% (Elam & Gallup, 1989).

2.) The leadership forces hierarchy can be used as a framework for generating and analyzing solutions to simulations, case studies and experiential learning activities. Although leaders have five forces at their disposal in solving problems, most leaders are likely to consciously use only technical, human and educational forces. While some problems lend themselves to a strictly technical solutions, most critical problems

require more complex solutions (Schon, 1989). These problems are likely to require solutions utilizing several or all forces. Some of these problems may not be solvable in a real sense, that is, the problems may be caused by forces beyond the leader's control. In such instances the best a leader can hope to achieve is to facilitate a symbolic solution by committing time or resources to the problem, or by initiating activity that indicates both the importance of the problem to him/her and how it fits in the context of what is important to the school. For example, a principal facing a problem of student vandalism on the way to and from school may not be able to permanently stop the vandalism but can symbolize the importance of the problem to him/her by forming a committee to generate solutions, highlighting to students the discrepancy between the value system they adhere to in school and the one they practice outside the school, personally escorting students to vandalized neighbors homes to deliver apologies or simply walking the streets of the vandalized neighborhood during student passing periods. These actions have a real effect but they also send a symbolic message. None of the actions may totally solve the problem; each, however,

communicates the principal's concern through a committment of time, energy, or resources.

Students can be sensitized to the five forces by generating solutions to simulated problems using each force. A typical class using the multiple frameworks discussed, would begin with the introduction of content, proceed to the use of a simulation or case study in which apparent and other real problems are identified, continue with solutions developed in the context of the content and leadership forces, and conclude with discussion or debriefing (see Figure 2). For example, discussion of two-dimensional leadership theory would begin with an explanation of the theory, followed by a simulation, perhaps one involving a meeting between the principal and several staff members attempting to resolve a difference of opinion. Individual or group reflection on the apparent problem and other possible real problems would follow with several alternative statements of the problem being generated. Discussion or role playing of possible solutions would then occur. Responses to the situation would be analyzed in the context of the use of consideration and initiating structure and solutions developed would be classified according to the leadership forces. Additional solutions would be generated by the

class utilizing previously neglected leadership forces. Key questions to be addressed would be, "What type of solution might be developed using the technical (human, educational, symbolic, and cultural) force? What symbolic message does each solution send? Which solution is most appropriate for this problem? Is it desirable in this instance to implement solutions utilizing several forces?"

Insert Figure 2 about here

Vision

In order to effectively utilize symbolic and cultural leadership forces, a personal vision is necessary. Symbolic leadership without a guiding vision is meaningless. If leaders randomly exercise symbolic leadership they are likely to send conflicting messages to constituents, creating weak, inconsistent cultures in their schools. Such leadership lays the organization's culture open to other, including dysfunctional, influences. Cultural leadership remains inert as a force until symbolic leadership has created a strong

organizational culture through consistent attention to the technical, human and educational elements that are important in the organization. Once this has occurred action and decisions will be influenced by a.) group norms consistent with the organizational culture, and b.) a commitment to the value system of the organization.

When students initially enter educational administration preparation programs, their visions are likely to be ill-defined. As they proceed through the program, integrating belief systems with content, past practice, and simulated experiences they engage in a vision-clarification process. As students reflect on how they go about responding to problems, comparing their responses to cognitively-held belief systems, discrepancies between beliefs and actions may surface. Reconciling these differences leads to refinement and reshaping of beliefs, eventually resulting in a more focused vision. Previously cited questions are expanded upon to include questions such as, "Is my solution to this problem consistent with my vision? What is my solution communicating about my vision? Specifically, how does the solution relate to my beliefs about people? How does it relate to my beliefs about the educational program?" Even simulations dealing with seemingly

technical matters can be utilized as vision-clarification exercises. For example, an exercise in budget development can be utilized to address beliefs about people and the instructional process. How are staff members involved in the budget development process? Is their input requested? Is their input implemented? What does the decision-making process utilized indicate regarding the leader's beliefs about people? What does the projected expenditure of money indicate about the importance of instructional versus management matters? Do projected expenditures indicate the school's instructional philosophy? Do they indicate that certain subject areas are more important than other areas?

Vision-clarification achieved through mental reflection, however, is insufficient. Mental images are amorphous, floating in and out of consciousness and exhibiting varying degrees of consistency with each other. Researchers on the writing process have noted that writing helps clarify as well as generate thought (Irmscher, 1979). It forces individuals to address issues of consistency to which they might otherwise remain oblivious. Similar to a signed contract, putting thoughts into writing provides an additional measure of commitment. Consequently, students in educational

administration programs should have opportunities to engage in writing exercises that initially facilitate the vision-clarification process and later, allow them to craft refined (but continually evolving) educational platforms (Abel, Barnett, Brill, Dolk & Morris, 1988). Platforms should present not only a vision for schools and a philosophy of leadership, but should also address implications for practice in terms of areas such as school structure, decision-making, instructional delivery and content. Exercises to facilitate development of a final platform might include organizational culture analyses; portraitures of leaders, schools or other organizations (Kendall, 1989) and reflective journals.

Conclusion

If vision is a key ingredient of effective leadership, then it must be more thoroughly incorporated throughout educational administration preparation programs. The use of multiple frameworks to integrate coursework and experience combined with writing exercises that force meaning-clarification are a step in that direction.

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Table 1

Correlation of Educational Administration Courses with Leadership Forces

Technical	Human	Educational	Symbolic	Cultural
Law				
Finance				
Technology				
Research				
Statistics				
Sch.Ad.Intro.	Sch.Ad.Intro.			
Evaluation	Evaluation			
Sch.-Commun. Relations	Sch.-Commun. Relations			
Supervision	Supervision			
Personnel	Personnel			
Principalship		Principalship		
		Curriculum		
	Org.Theory		Org. Theory	Org. Theory

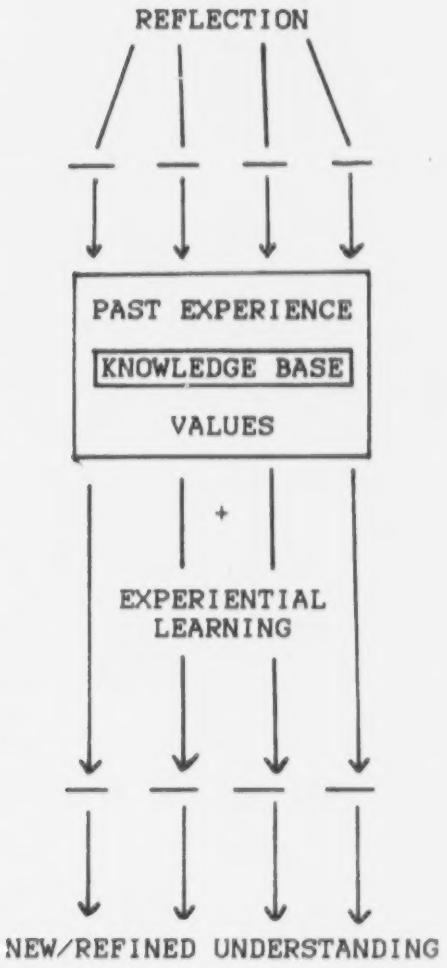

Figure 1. Place of reflection in integrating knowledge, experience and experiential learning.

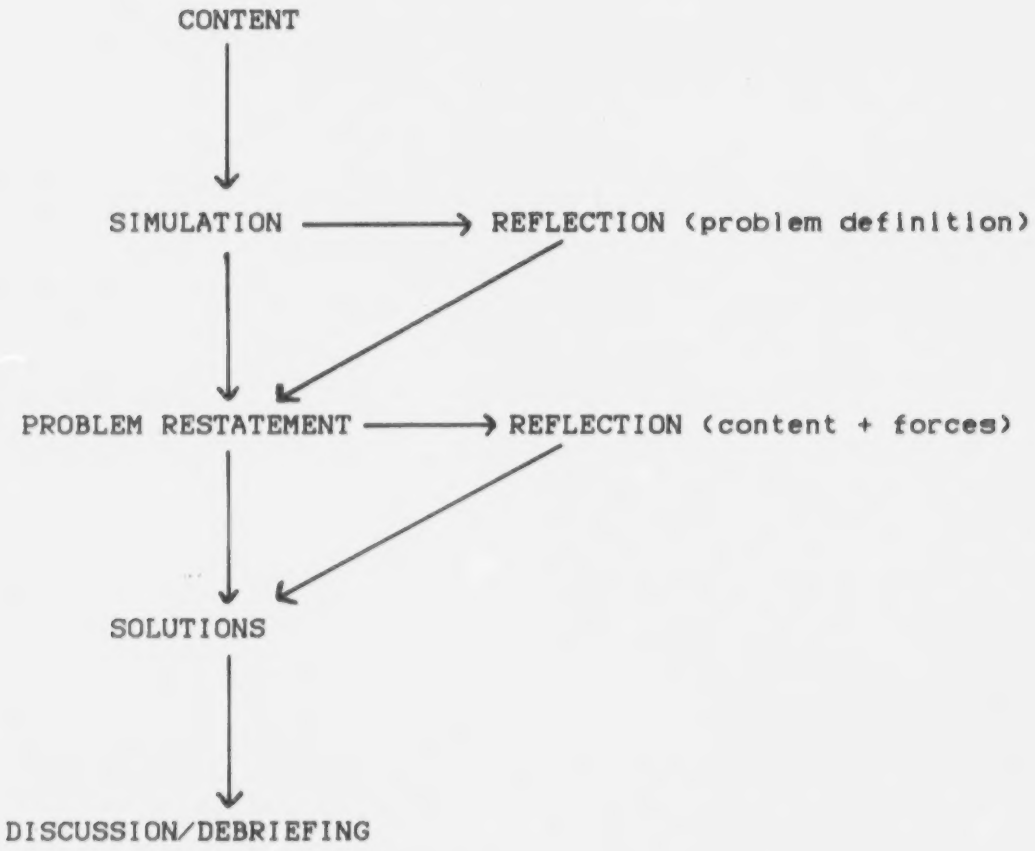

Figure 2: Lesson plan utilizing reflection and leadership forces as integrating frameworks.